

Obscure provision in trade bill would allow foreign countries to challenge America's ability to block foreign ownership of U.S. national security interests

Washington, DC - Citing concerns that Congress may be stripping away America's authority to block foreign investment deals that threaten to compromise national security interests, 12th

District Georgia Congressman John Barrow (D-Savannah) today voted against the U.S. - Oman Free Trade Agreement.

"Fair trade is vital to the American economy," Barrow said after the vote. "But any trade deal that threatens domestic control of key national security interests like our ports is not 'fair.'"

Barrow's objections to the trade deal centered on a recently highlighted provision in the bill that would allow a foreign company incorporated in Oman to acquire stateside operations of U.S. port facilities, such as cargo handling and terminal operations. Under the bill, if Congress or the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) decided to block such a deal, the United States could be sued by that foreign country and dragged into an international tribunal in order to defend our own national security claims.

"This Congress should not be in the business of rubber stamping trade deals that may force the U.S. to one day go before some international organization to defend and define our own national security interests," Barrow said. "America's national security interests are America's business, and no one else's."

Earlier this year, Barrow raised concerns about the process that is supposed to review foreign investment in the United States after it was announced that a military parts provider from Rincon, Georgia, was being purchased by a company from the United Arab Emirates.

"We need to watch the store - not give it away," Barrow said. "In a post 9/11 world, national security concerns must be front and center when it comes to foreign trade deals."

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Contact: Harper Lawson, (202) 225-2823

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